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**2010 Substantive session of the Economic and Social Council
Operational Activities Segment
13 July 2010-07-09 Closing remarks by the Chair
H.E. Mr. Alexandru Cujba, Vice President of the Council**

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,
Distinguished delegates,

We have reached the end of the 2010 Operational Activities Segment of ECOSOC.

I would like first of all to express my profound appreciation to all of you who actively participated, as well as to the panellists and moderators who enriched our discussions.

We met against the backdrop of the preparations for the Summit on the Millennium Development Goals to be held in September. The Council's examination of operational activities for development took on added importance in this light. Increasing the impact and efficiency of operational activities is critical so that the United Nations can better help programme countries advance towards the MDGs - as part of a strengthened global partnership for development.

We also met on the heel of the adoption by the General Assembly of resolution 64/289 on system-wide coherence. The resolution created "UN-Women" as a historical step. It also launched new measures to make United Nations operational activities more coherent by improving their governance and funding. This process showed the high expectations of Member States in the work of the Council as the body spearheading and overseeing the development cooperation of the system and moving forward the guidance of the Assembly. I believe that we lived up to these expectations during this session.

We had an important task ahead of us: giving impetus to the implementation of the Triennial Comprehensive Policy Review of Operational Activities by the United Nations system.

The general debate and your interventions during the various panel discussions showed the continued firm commitment of Member States to the goals and actions identified in the 2007 TCPR.

The reports of the Secretary-General and of the funds and programmes, together with the interventions of United Nations system representatives, indicated that the various organizations have continued to work closely together in undertaking actions mandated by the General Assembly three years ago.

Our dialogue with the Heads of Funds and Programmes, in particular, gave evidence that the United Nations system is focused on helping to accelerate progress towards the MDGs in a more coordinated and effective manner. It has worked to identify scalable best practices that can be replicated. It is mobilizing broad based partnerships with Governments, civil society, the private sector and within the UN system to provide holistic support to the MDGs. It is exploring ways to reach the poorest of the poor.

The outcome of the Hanoi High-level Tripartite Conference on “Delivering as One” has indicated that Delivering as One is strengthening the relevance, coherence, comparative advantage and accountability of the UN development system at country-level, and has the potentials for significantly reducing transactions costs. We have heard programme pilot countries say that, for them, the old way of doing business is no longer an option. The independent evaluation of the lessons learned from Delivering as One will be a much awaited input for the quadriennial comprehensive policy review.

Overall, the United Nations system has made great strides in ensuring national ownership and leadership of programme countries over its programmes and activities. It is essential that the system continues respecting the diverse country situations in developing its programmes.

Building national capacities is a sine qua non condition for national ownership and leadership. It should apply to both governments and to bodies and organizations of civil society. The United Nations remain a trusted partner to provide support in these areas. The challenge of sustainability and retention of national capacities is ever present.

The United Nations is challenged to adapt its country level capacities to the various specific needs of programme countries - be they Least Developed Countries or Middle-Income Countries, or countries recovering from a conflict or natural disaster. It also has to respond to emerging needs such as the growing demand for policy advice or the need for support in the area of climate change and development. The role of resident coordinators and the support of regional structures are increasingly important, as is the use of expertise from headquarters level.

While a considerable amount of resources flow through the United Nations system, they are not always provided in the form most conducive to national ownership and leadership and to longer term planning. Core resources remain the bedrock of operational activities. However, there are important complementarities and synergies between core and non-core resources. What matters most is ensuring that funding is multi-year and predictable, flexible, and aligned with national priorities. With this in mind, the right mix of core and non core resources has to be found.

The importance of UN system's accountability and transparency cannot be overemphasized. A continued effort has to be made to improve management practices so as to enhance the impact of every cent of UN aid. There are continuing challenges such as multiple reporting requirements, the diversity of staffing policies at country level and the up-front investment needed for systems change.

Many other challenges remain in implementing the guidance of the General Assembly. One example is in the area of support to South-South cooperation. Those challenges should be analyzed in future reporting by the Secretary-General.

Overall, our debates have been not only lively and frank, but also very rich, which was one of my objectives for this segment. I believe that the expert roundtable held before this segment and the participation of high-level national focal points for operational activities for development enabled us to learn more about the realities of national ownership and capacity development.

We took note of the many ideas and positions that emerged during the discussions of the Council. They will enrich the operational activities for development of the United Nations system. Importantly, they will inspire the preparations towards the Quadriennial Comprehensive Policy Review of Operational Activities which should start very soon.

I thank you.